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ABSTRACT

The efforts of the teacher education program at Northern Michigan University (NMU) to improve the education of teachers in field settings are described, using criteria of the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) related to field experience programs. The paper discusses how the NCATE criteria are met or exceeded through the careful selection of sites, provision of various types of experiences, supervision, sequence of experiences, skills developed, lengths of experiences, professional roles and responsibilities, relationships with graduates through follow-up studies and continuing assistance, and relationships with schools via continuing professional development and collaboration in decision making. NMU's field experiences are based upon a taxonomy that includes role orientation, role conceptualization, role learning and commitment, role assumption, and role evaluation. (JDD)

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Education of Teachers in Field Settings: A Case Study

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Abstract

The efforts of one teacher education program to improve the education of teachers in field settings are described using NCATE criteria related to the world of practice. The selection of sites, types of experiences, supervision, sequence of experiences, skills developed, lengths of experiences, professional roles and responsibilities, and relationships with graduates and schools are presented and briefly discussed.

Teacher education experiences in field settings need to be based upon a strong philosophical and theoretical framework, a sound knowledge base and a well-articulated set of values. Experiences in field settings before teacher education students undertake student teaching or an internship is a common practice in teacher preparation programs in the United States (Moore, 1979). A review of research suggests that the value of field experiences depend upon being prepared to learn from the experience (Lanier and Little, 1986). If learners do not have the knowledge base, skills or disposition needed to learn from practical experience, then the experience may not result in any real value. The need for teacher education programs that provide the prerequisite knowledge base, monitor teaching experiences, sequence experiences, and balance instruction and field experience is recommended (National Commission for Excellence in Teacher Education, 1985).

Field experiences can serve as a vehicle to connect philosophy, theory, knowledge base and values to practice. To do so, they need to offer more than an opportunity for students to observe what takes place in the classroom if they are to prepare students to be effective practitioners. A brief description of what Northern Michigan University (NMU) is doing to improve the education of teachers in field settings is given in this paper. The National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) Category II criteria for effective field experience programs will each be presented and Northern's compliance with each briefly presented.

Clinical and Field-Based Experiences

NCATE Category II, Relationship to the World of Practice, has three standards and fifteen criteria for compliance (numbered 24-38). The first standard, Standard II.A, Clinical and Field-Based Experiences, gives criteria related to whether the teacher education field experiences prepare students to

work in the roles for which they are being prepared. NMU's field experiences are based upon a taxonomy consisting of the following phases: role orientation, role conceptualization, role learning and commitment, role assumption, and role evaluation (Smith and Sagan, 1975). This longitudinal process of combining theory and practice to prepare professionals allows for more growth in making instructional decisions and reflection on practice. In Chart 1 is a list of the NMU courses requiring a field practica according to the phases of the field experience taxonomy.

Role orientation involves observation visits to schools and classrooms to better understand them and the teachers' role in them. Our field experience related to this level of the taxonomy occurs in our first course, ED 201 Introduction to Education. Students spend one-half day observing in a classroom and report on how is discipline maintained, one assignment from the teachers and a child's point of view, and how do students learn in this class. They also interview the teacher about why he or she became a teacher, the difference between the first year and later years of teaching, and what the teacher is trying to accomplish.

Experiences in field settings to develop role conceptualization occur in the pre methods education course most students take next. For elementary education students that course is ED 230 Teaching and Learning in the Elementary Classroom and for secondary students it is ED 231 Teaching and Learning in the Secondary Classroom. This 15-hour field experience will become a 30-hour experience beginning winter 1995. It will include structured observations and working with children in classrooms to better understand them, schools and teachers. The elective courses ED 222, Classroom Management, and ED 223, Multicultural Education, aid students in developing insights into the role classroom management and culture plays in education. Both one-credit courses are taught at a nearby middle school over a week long period and involve the students interacting with students and faculty.

Those students admitted into the methods phase of the program move into the role learning and commitment phase of the field experience taxonomy. At this level they begin to practice the skills and duties of a teacher and to reflect on their teaching and commitment.

In our elementary program, we have several field experiences to develop this phase of the taxonomy. One course requires students to read a book aloud to a class or small group for one session in an area classroom. Our science and our social studies methods students all teach two lessons in pairs to two different area

elementary classrooms for each course. Our language arts and reading courses have become site-based with the classes meeting in area elementary schools. The education students have experiences in those same schools with teachers who have been oriented to the expectations of our program and are cooperating to achieve our objectives. Students also video tape lessons delivered in the classroom and critique them. In the first language arts course the students work with groups of children in various classrooms in the school. In the second course the students work with one elementary classroom individually tutoring a child or a pair of children.

Mathematics methods students spend a minimum of 10 sessions with cooperating teachers who have been specially trained and selected based upon their mastery of the best methods.

Our students in the teaching of the mentally impaired program not only complete the elementary program, but also several courses in mental impairment. One field experience of 20 hours observing and helping in a special education classroom is required.

The role learning and commitment phase in our secondary program is the focus of two field experiences. The first occurs with ED 319 and consists of students tutoring for 20 hours local middle and secondary schools and doing a case study of their tutoree. The second field experience is with ED 349 students working with an area teacher in his/her classroom for 15 hours and teaching a lesson in their major area.

Role assumption is primarily realized through student teaching and the teaching seminar. This experience requires the students to assume and effectively carry out the duties and responsibilities of a teacher for which the earlier field experiences have prepared them.

Role evaluation is the process of revising and improving one's teaching based on new knowledge, skills, needs and dispositions, and should continue throughout one's teaching career. Role evaluation is most related to the time our students are taking continuing courses after certification. As they are already practicing teachers and have many experiences to draw from, specified field experiences are only connected with courses that are preparing students for new areas, such as learning disabilities and educational administration.

Criterion for compliance number 24 requires "students to observe, plan, and practice in a variety of settings appropriate to the professional roles for which they are being prepared" (NCATE, 1987, p. 41). Observation begins in the first

experience and continues throughout all of the field experiences. Planning and practice usually starts in the methods level field experiences with practice playing a larger role as the student progresses through their program. The variety of settings is generally limited to this region. We can give students experiences in field settings that span their level of certification (K-8 for elementary students and 7-12 for secondary students). Most of these setting are in rural areas that have very limited racial or religious diversity (less than 3% minority population on the average with fewer than 2% being of non-Christian religions). Our students are exposed to students with exceptionalities, lower class students, and students of various European origins.

NCATE criterion 25 states that experiences need to provide the skills to diagnose and solve problems involving the application of educational principles and theories (NCATE, 1987). Every field experience has opportunities to diagnose and solve problems and apply the knowledge learned in classes about effective teaching. Education students analyze and evaluate what they observe, plan and practice. For example, ED 318, Elementary Reading Instruction II, meets in a public elementary school and the students spend part of their class time working with one or two students in reading instruction. They diagnose and solve reading problems using information learned as part of their course and receive feedback from the classroom teacher and the university professor. The questions and concerns arising from the practica students' experience become the focus of class learning and discussions. The practica students take their tutoring very seriously and are very motivated to learn how they might be better able assist their tutorees in becoming better readers. As the learning is active and meaningful to the students, the retention and usefulness of the knowledge is expected to be greater.

The supervision in the above example relates to criterion 26: "Field-based and clinical experiences are accompanied by professional supervision and feedback that include attention to instructional plans, characteristics of learners and instructional settings, structured observation of the experiences, and detailed debriefing about program goals" (NCATE, 1987, p. 41). ED 318 combines all these components in its field experience and many of our other field experiences have many of these elements as part of the course. The level of supervision increases as the students progress through our program with the final experiences having the level of supervision outlined in criterion 26.

We have found it more challenging to meet criterion 27 concerning experiences with culturally diverse and exceptional populations (NCATE, 1987). With inclusive education generally practiced in the schools where our students have field experiences, it has not been difficult to give our students experience with exceptional populations. Because these same schools lack racial and religious diversity, it has been difficult to give our student experiences with these populations. Currently we offer opportunities to student teach in more urban and racially mixed areas. These areas are over three hours away from our campus and few student avail themselves of these options. We also offer a multicultural education course on an elective basis. We are discussing other options to increase the multicultural perspectives of all graduates from our program, as we feel more needs to be done in this area.

We sequence our field experiences to have students gradually assume full professional competence and responsibility, which relates to NCATE criterion 28 (NCATE, 1987). The sequencing relates to the taxonomy for planning field experiences explained above and NMU's Professional Studies Taxonomy. We are currently exploring how the goals and performance indicators of our program will be met through our courses and field experiences.

NMU's student teaching for 16 weeks exceeds the NCATE criterion (29) of ten weeks full-time student teaching (NCATE, 1987). We also are in accord with criterion 30. Our University supervisors, supervising teachers, and student teachers "have a well-defined charge to support a successful experience as the education student assumes full-time responsibility in the school setting" (NCATE, 1987, p. 41). Orientation sessions are held for each of these groups to explain their roles and responsibilities in the student teaching process. Also, *The Student Teaching Guide* gives much information to help in this process. We also carefully select our sites for the field experiences to offer experiences that reinforce the goals of our program that relates to criterion 31. The last criterion of Standard II.A is number 32: "The roles and responsibilities of education students, college based supervisors and field based supervisors who participate in field-based and clinical experiences are delineated in negotiated written agreements" (NCATE, 1987, p. 41). The roles and responsibilities have been negotiated with all parties involved. The formal written agreements would be found in the contracts, syllabi and field experience guides.

Relationships with Graduates

NCATE Standard II. B relates to maintaining relationships with graduates through such means as follow-up studies and continuing assistance. Northern Michigan University meets the three criteria in this standard. They do this through annual questionnaires sent to recent graduates and discussion with graduates and their employers and colleagues. We have close relations with area educators and get direct feedback from our graduates and their fellow educators as we are in contact with them through professional development classes and in-school visits. As job opportunities are limited in our area, our direct contact with recent graduates who are teaching is limited. Our formal questionnaire responses indicate our graduates feel generally well prepared and their employers feel they have the skill needed to be effective.

The results of our evaluation efforts have been used to improve our programs. For example, areas of concern, such as classroom management, dealing with diversity, and using computers, have been strengthened in our program and will continue to receive attention in the future. One way we have better addressed these areas is through our Seminar in Teaching taken concurrently with student teaching. We also now offer new elective courses in each of these areas.

Finally, relating to criteria 35, we have worked with area school districts to assist our recent graduates employed in their districts. Our graduates have been generally quite successful in their new professional roles and neither the districts nor our graduates have been responsive to our offers of assistance. Discussions with our graduates who are first year teachers reveal that they are so busy orienting to their new roles that they have no time or interest in outside assistance. Because these graduates generally begin taking professional development courses through Northern soon after they begin their teaching, they receive support through their continuing education at the University. Next the state will be requiring mentors be assigned to beginning teachers, which will address this need more directly and forcefully.

Relationships with Schools

The last standard of Category II deals with maintaining "relationships with schools to advance the goals of the profession and to promote the effective preparation of professional educators" (NCATE, 1987, p.42). Northern Michigan University's relationship with area schools is positive and improving. Most of the

teachers in these schools are graduates of Northern Michigan University and are taking or have taken continuing education courses through Northern. We are more involved with the education in P-12 schools with our recent Professional Development School, increased cooperation in field experiences, continuing professional development activities offered by University faculty and agencies, and greater collaboration in decision making and projects. Examples of this include the involvement of P-12 teacher and administrator on our University committees and advisory councils. Because Northern is the only teacher education institution in the Upper Peninsula, we hold the professional conferences and offer the professional services needed by area teachers and schools. We are also connecting a number of schools via computer networks and making available to a number of educators opportunities work to together more collaboratively through such things as e-mail.

Because the area educators are enrolled in our graduate courses, they are involved with our faculty in researching question of interest to educators. Our faculty and area educators also involved together in many professional development activities and organizations. With our increased involvement in area schools through having college classes held on site in school buildings and our professors and students working closely with classroom teachers, our faculty benefit by the increased involvement with practice in P-12 schools and classroom teachers benefit by increased exposure to new methods and ideas regarding practice. We have excellent relations with principals and classroom teachers with whom we place our students. The principals and classroom teachers with whom we have placed practica students generally speak very highly of our field practica program and are doing a good job assisting our students to become effective teachers. When problems or concerns occur, as they often do, we try our best to address them in a prompt, responsible and effective manner. All of this can be time consuming, but the benefit in improved practica experiences for our students is apparent in the level of opportunity, attention and concern given by the principals and classroom teachers to doing a good job with our students. University faculty also supervise student teachers, which keeps the contact and collaboration between the University and the schools high.

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Chart 1. Field practica courses according to phases of the education program. The students required to take the courses and field experience are listed after the course number: elementary (elm), secondary (sec), elective (elc), and special education (spe) only. Special education students must also complete all of the elementary education program.

Pre-Methods (Choosing to Become a Teacher)

Level 1-The Institution, Phase 1-**Role Orientation**

ED 201 (all)	Introduction to Education

Level 2-The Student, Phase 2- **Role Conceptualization**

ED 222 (elc)	Classroom Management
ED 223 (elc)	Multicultural Education
ED 230 (elm)	Teaching and Learning in the Elementary Classroom
ED 231 (sec)	Teaching and Learning in the Secondary Classroom

Methods (Learning to Become a Teacher)

Level 3-Instruction, Phase 3 **Role Learning and Commitment**

ED 306 (elm)	Children's Literature
ED 310 (elm)	Social Studies Methods & Materials for Elementary Teachers
ED 311/316 (elm)	Language Arts Methods & Materials/Elem Read Instruction I
ED 312 (elm)	Science Methods and Materials for Elementary Teachers
ED 318 (elm)	Elementary Reading Instruction II
ED 319 (sec)	Teaching of Reading for Secondary Teachers
ED 349 (sec)	General Secondary Methods
ED 360 (spe)	Orientation to Special Education
MA 353 (elm)	Elementary Mathematics Methods

Student Teaching (Becoming a Teacher)

Level 4-Practice, Phase 4- **Role Assumption**

ED 420-440 (all)	Student Teaching
ED 450 (all)	Seminar in Teaching

Teaching

Level 5, Phase 5- **Role Evaluation**

ED 500-999 (all)	Selected graduate level courses